

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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April 5, 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: A Possible Visit to Berlin

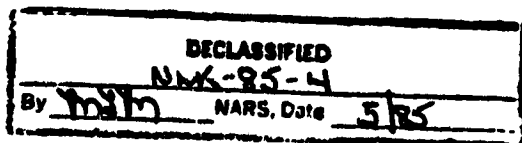
One of the difficulties is how we can bring home to the Soviets our determination to maintain our rights in Berlin. Words may not be enough. Representatives may be ignored such as was Ambassador Thompson's warning with respect to Laos. Thus it may be worthwhile to consider whether it may not be wise to stake the President's prestige deliberately to the freedom of Berlin. The forthcoming visit with President de Gaulle may provide such an opportunity. I would recommend that consideration be given to a brief stop in Berlin either just before or just after the visit to Paris. The advantages seem obvious: (1) It would signify as nothing else our commitment to the freedom of Berlin. (2) It would be a tremendous boost for the morale of the population of Berlin. (3) It would make a profound impact in public opinion in the Federal Republic.

The disadvantages (together with some counter arguments) seem to be:

(1) The concern such a trip might cause to the Secret Service. Still I cannot imagine a Communist attack on the person of the President.

(2) There will be a delicate political problem because of the German electoral campaign. If Brandt receives the President, Adenauer must be there too. Or else, a stop in Bonn has to be added and this might open the floodgates.

(3) The Soviets may construe such an action as a provocation and it might focus unnecessary attention on Berlin. This seems to me excessively timid. The Soviets will not drop the Berlin issue through an oversight. They have raised it at every opportunity since the inauguration.



Henry A. Kissinger
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